

Repentance or Ruine :
OR, AN
Earnest Perswasive
TO THE
DUE OBSERVANCE
OF THE
General Fast,
Appointed by
Her Majesty's Proclamation,
ON THE
Fourteenth Day of January next 170⁷₈.

By a Lover of our Church and Nation.

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Repentance or Ruine:

OR, AN

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TO THE

DUE OBSERVANCE

OF THE

GENERAL FAST.

IT is matter of Comfort to all sensible Persons, That it hath pleased the *Queen*, whom GOD long preserve and prosper, to appoint a Day of Humiliation before God, to be solemnly observed throughout this whole Island, in the Sense of God's infinite Sovereignty and all-disposing Providence; and of our great Provocations in his Sight.

In this, *Her Majesty* seasonably brings to our Minds some great Truths which many of us seemed to have forgotten or over-

look'd, namely, that GOD ruleth over the *Kingdoms* and *Armies* of Men; that the *Greatest* and *Best* of Mortals are but His *Instruments*; and that *Safety*, *Prosperity*, and *Victory*, are his Gifts. And it is hereunto very agreeable that we also call to Mind, that we must serve Him in a pious *Sincerity* of *Spirit*, or we do nothing at all to any good Effect; yea, that a meer *formal* and *superficial* Fast will rather heighten his Indignation than incline his Mercy. God grant therefore, that this Her Majesty's seasonable Proclamation may find such a general Disposition in Her People to comply with the pious Ends of it, as that of the King of *Nineveh* did among his People, of whom it is said, *That they all put on Sack-cloth* according to the Command and Example of their King; and *turned from their Evil Ways*: And that God, seeing their Repentance and Reformation, did not bring upon them the Ruine he had threatened. *Jonah 3. 6, 10.*

That which gave this effectual Turn to this Prince and his People, was their firm *Beleif* and *Assurance*, that the Ruine which God had threaten'd by his Prophet, would surely come upon them, if they persisted but a few days longer in their Impieties. For it is said (*Jonah 3. 5.*) *So the People of Nineveh beleived God, and proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sack-cloth from the Greatest to the least*
of

of them, &c. Now this is what we greatly want, even an *effectual Faith* concerning what God hath declared by his *Prophets* and *Apostles*; in which those *Pagans* were not such INFIDELS as many that are called *Christians*; who, notwithstanding their *glorious Profession*, do not *beleive God*, nor give just *Credit* to his Promises and Threatnings. For tho' we are told again and again in the Book of God, That *we must repent or perish*; and that GOD *hateth all the Workers of Iniquity*; yet, what Multitudes are there among us who promise themselves *Peace* and *Safety* in their Sins?

It will here perhaps be replied with some quickness, that we are not in the Danger that *Nineveh* was; that our *Grand Enemy* is much reduced; and that tho' he has made a good *Stand* this Campaign in one Place, and got *Ground* in three others, and has withall been *Fortunate*, as they will call it, at Sea in Five or Six Enterprizes; yet that one good Blow more will rid us of our Fears, and *constrain* Him to accept such Terms of Subsistence as it shall please his Conquerors to give Him.

But is it not perfect Madnes to rely on things that are wholly out of our Power; and at the same time to affront Him who ordereth all Events as it pleaseth Him?

Does not every prudent Person look on *Self-Confidence* and *Boasting*, as Omens of Miscarriage and Shame? Must we yet have more *Blows* and *Reprimands* of Divine Providence ere we learn that it's deceitful and vain, as well as impious and arrogant, to put our Trust in any Thing but in God?

It is time surely that such as make little Account of God's Blessing, and either do not mention this *Point* at all, or but in a secondary and slight way, or perhaps merely for Custom sake; I say, it is time that such *Idolizers* of their own *Brain* and *Hand* learn Instruction from that incomparably *Wise Prince*, who not only from his *inspired Knowledge*, but from a long *Experience* of Things, left this Maxim to Posterity, (Eccles. 9. 11.) *I returned, and saw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the BATTLE to the STRONG.* It is not the meer Numbers or Valor of Troops that can prevail, where God will have it otherwise: as in the Case of the *Chaldean Army* against the *Jews*, where God declared himself positively for the former, how few or weak soever; saying, *Tho' ye had smitten the whole Army of the Chaldeans that fight against You, and there remained but wounded Men among them, yet should they rise up every Man in his Tent, and burn this City with Fire,* (Jer. 37. 10.) So vain is it to trust in *Humane Power*, and
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to Slight that of God: Like the prophane *Champion* of the *Philistines*, who came out to encounter the little *Jewish Stripling* with *Pride* in his Heart, and *Blasphemy* in his Mouth; till the God he defied signed his *Execution*, and the Youth he despised cut off his *Head*, (1 Sam. 17. 49.)

It favours therefore as little of Prudence as of Piety to say, as some have done, even by way of Address to Her Majesty, that *Her Efforts are to be redoubled where Divine Providence gives a Check*; without any mention of humble Recourse to God, or a principal Trust in Him. For what *Humane Power* can *push on* what an *Almighty Arm drives back*? Or what Force or Forces can hinder God from giving an *irreparable Blow* the next Year, where he gave only a *Check* this, if it so pleases Him? If People say, they mean this, let them speak it plainly in a Case where *Glory* ought in the most eminent manner to be given to GOD: As in the Case of *Victory* and *Conquest*; for GOD is the LORD OF HOSTS, and He will not give his GLORY to another.

The Argument would run more decently and more powerfully thus; "We see in many Instances that it pleases *Divine Providence* to give a manifest Check to *Her Majesty's Arms*, which we hope will incite *Her Majesty*, in her great Piety and Wisdom,

dom, to exert Her utmost Efforts against every Thing that offends God in her Court and Dominions, which are the true Steps to Prosperity and Success; and in the sense of this Stricter Alliance with GOD, to make a more strenuous Effort against the Enemies of Her Crown and People.

And indeed, till we see in this *Island* a more general Disposition to glorify God, and to do good one to another, which God in Mercy hasten; we cannot but see that we are not in any Condition to enjoy the Blessings of Peace and Prosperity; but on the contrary, that our Ruine would probably be hastened by the Affluence of outward Enjoyments. As the Case now stands, our Provocations against God increase with every eminent Favour He gives us; as many Distempers are increased by high Feeding.

Had God given Success to our Enterprize upon *Thoulon*, the last Campaign; there would probably have been many Thousands among us disordered in Drink upon the Report of it, that were not so at the Report of our Disappointment.

We saw *Pride* and *Presumption* increasing from the very Moment of the Account of our late *Great Victories*; the sure Presages of *Calamity* and *Misery*. And where such Provocations abound, God has *Earthquakes*, *Pestilences*, and *Storms*, to execute his Wrath,

as we have lately felt, tho' our Enemies should be supposed to be all cut off. Yea, God hath newly given us, in the dismal Mis-carriage of our *Brave and Faithful Admiral* and some *Capital Ships of War*, a Wound, of which we do not yet know the Depth and Length; and hath shewn us hereby, that He can destroy our *chief Strength* and Defence in one *Instant*, without *Storms*, and without any visible *Enemy*, yea, by means perfectly unaccountable. The plain Lesson that we ought to learn from this and other late *Scourges* of Divine Providence, from the GREATEST to the LEAST of us, is; That GOD, the Great and Terrible GOD, is to be feared, (not mock'd or contemn'd) for that None can stand in his Sight when once HE is angry. We want Sense, as well as Faith, if we do not fear GOD. The Inferences of Reason as well as Religion are constraining Arguments to us to serve Him. It is undeniable, that we cannot live in the World, much less live with Comfort in it, without the Friendship of the Glorious Governour of it. COUNSEL and MIGHT are His. God can direct, or distract our Councils; He can inspire, or enfeeble our Forces; He can give us Victory, or make us a Prey.

This is a plain Demonstration to all Ranks of Men among us, that we take no true steps to advance the Honour and Safety of our Country,

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Country, in *Church* or *State*, till we heartily set our selves to remove those Enormities wherewith our *Great* and *Holy God* is evidently offended by us, and incensed against us.

When, O when! shall the *High-Places of Iniquity* and *Schools of Vice* be put down! I mean the *Scandalous PLAY-HOUSES*, which the late most Reverend *Arch-Bishop Tillotson*, (in his Third Sermon concerning the Education of Children, Pag. 220. first Edition) an unexceptionable Judge of the Case, calls the *Nurseries of Lewdness and Vice, and the CHAPPELS of the Devil*; as if he would testify to the World, that in them the *Holy God* is defied, *Good Manners* corrupted, and whole *Hecatombs* of Souls offer'd up to the Devil. This is matter of *Grief* and *Heaviness* to all the sober part of this Nation; to see the *Nets of Vice* openly spread, and so baited, that it is hardly possible for *Youthful Spectators* to escape *Ruine* from them, and yet no Remedy. A very dismal Thought indeed! that in a *Christian State* there should be no way to prevent that *Diabolical Artifice* to *debauch* by *Diversions*, and *destroy* in *Sport*.

Ah! When shall we come to a just sense of our Danger by reason of the *Advancement* of our Impieties, both under the Corrections of *God's Rod*, and the *Dispensations* of his *Mercy*, which give us great reason to fear, that they will admit of no Remedy. If

If we *blaspheme* GOD, and *mock* Religion, even whilst He threatens us with Destruction, and shews us the *Instruments* of it, in the Malice and Power of our Enemies, from whom we have been delivered many times by a *Providence that seems Miraculous* to all the World: If in this apparent Danger of *general Ruine* from abroad, we are ready to *devour* one another at Home: If in a state of a *long and wasting War*, we abound in *Luxury and Pride*: If in such a Noon-day Glory of the *Gospel*, we deny Redemption by the *Blood of Jesus Christ*: If the *Laws and Proclamations* against Prophaneness and Vice are little more then *empty Forms*, for want of due Execution; and if such as endeavour this, are more frowned upon and contemn'd than the Offenders themselves; and this not only by the openly vicious, but by Persons of a fairer Character: If the Infinite Majesty of *Almighty God* be outraged as far as Humane Malice, can carry it; in the reviling of His *great and tremendous Name*, and in challenges and *Defiance* of the utmost Sufferings that he hath threatned: If the Sins of *Sodom* are found in us, and *Atheism* and *Heathenism* advance in such a Dispensation of *Divine Light* as we enjoy: I say, if all or any of these heightened *Abominations* prevail over a considerable Part of this Nation;

Nation; alas! alas! what shall we say, what shall we do? Ah me! the whole *Head* is Sick, and the very *Heart* is faint. One would be tempted to retire, like *LOT* and his little Family, into some CAVE or Desert, till the *Flaming Storm* of Wrath be over-past. But this would be no security; the only Expedient is to flee unto *Jesus* by true Faith and Repentance, and to get shelter in the Clefts of his Wounds, till the strokes of *Divine Vengeance* be over-past.

The Good God touch the Hearts of all Ranks of People among us, that we may all Fast and Pray in true Humiliation of our Souls before him, if it may be a lengthening of our *Tranquillity*.

May our Most Gracious Sovereign, who is, under GOD, as the *Breath* of our Nostrils and the *Light* of our Eyes, scatter the Workers of Iniquity by her Frowns, determining with *King David*, not to favour a Wicked Person: May Her Majesty, who appears to excel most other Princes in the World in *Solemn Devotion*, out-shine them All in a *Glorious Zeal* for GOD and RELIGION, which are at present intolerably outraged: May Her Majesties excellent Proclamation against *Prophaness and Immorality* be duly executed, Her pious Orders to Her Sea-men and Soldiers be justly observed; and may the LEWD STAGE no longer skreen its *Impurities* under the
Name

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Name and Authority of so Good a Prince. These are most *Glorious Victories*, tending infallibly to present *Honour and Peace*, and to *Everlasting Triumphs*.

May the *Honourable Nobility* of this Kingdom ever tread the steps of *Virtue* and true *Greatness*; disdaining the *base Captivity* of bestial *Lusts* and *Passions*, which never fail to sully a *bright Character*, to debase a *Brave Spirit*, and to destroy an *Immortal Soul*.

May the *Ministers of Christ* cry Day and Night to God, as earnest and effectual *Advocates* for an offending People: May they, as *Moses*, stand in the *Gap* to avert God's *Wrath*; and as *Elias*, turn the Heart of this People to God; and like true Pastors, walk before their *Flocks* in the *paths of Salvation*, that all that name the *Name of Christ* may depart from all *Iniquity*.

May the *Magistrates* of this great City and Nation, by seasonable precaution, prevent the Scandalous Trade of *Taverns* and *Eating-Houses*, and the intolerable Practice of such as ride abroad for *Diversion* on the Day appointed for solemn *Humiliation*: And if any insolent *Zimri* dares reverse the pious Intention of that Day by the open indulgence of his Lusts, may he find that there are yet some among us of the Spirit of *Phinehas*, as bold for the Prince of *Light* as such
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can be for the Prince of *Darkness*. The due and steady Course of Justice upon such Offenders would be a good Expedient to prevent our *Plagues*; for one single *Act* of it once ceased a very *great One*.

In fine, may every Soul in this *united Island*, that is of capacity, appear truly penitent before God; for it is absolutely necessary to our *personal* as well as *National Welfare*.

Why should we think it much to abstain from the usual *Refreshments* and *Ornaments* of the Body for one Day, when this may so further the devotion of the Soul, as hereby to obtain *Peace, Plenty* and *Prosperity* to us and our Posterity; if the *Fruits* of a true Repentance abound in us and them?

In short, we must cast away our Sins, our *Impieties, Debaucheries* and *Divisions*; and must turn to our Holy God by Repentance and Amendment of Life; that God may, with honour to his Name, own us as *his People*, and may fight our *Battles*, restore our *Peace*, and establish our *Borders*.

What might not so many *Millions* of People, united in devout Prayer, obtain of that Merciful God, who hath promised to hear the Petition of *two or three* met together in his Name; and who seems, if we may so express it, to long for a Disposition in us fit to receive the *Great Mercies* which
his

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his Infinite Goodness inclines to bestow upon us? His kind expressions to his once *belov-
ed People* seem to be uttered with a Sigh to us also (Psal. 81. 13, 14.) *O that my People had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways? I should soon have subdued their Enemies, and turned my Hand against their Adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him, but their Time should have endured for Ever.*

But on the contrary, God will not be attoned with the *Skin* of a Sacrifice. If our *Fasts* are but *fawning Formalities*; if we do not *forsake*, as well as *confess*, our Sins; and if we go on to dishonour the *Christi-
an Name* by our bearing it; we cannot expect the *Blessing* of God, but a *Blast* in all we enjoy, and in every thing we put our hands unto. Be we assured, our *Miseries* will multiply with our *Sins*, and the *Ca-
lamities* of this World upon the impenitent will but introduce the inexpressible *Torments* of the other.

In this Case, Let such as *Fear God*, and are interested in his *Favour*, be often on their *Knees*, and cry day and night for Mercy upon us; that by the lifting up of their Hands, as of those of *Moses*, our *Israel* may prevail. May the Cries of these *Devout Souls* for Mercy countermine the *Vollies* of *prophane
Speeches*

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Speeches sent up to Heaven for Vengeance.

May these things be so seriously weighed by all of us, that we may appear in a penitent and devout Frame on the approaching day of *Humiliation*, and may live up to our *Vows* all our Days: that God, the good and merciful God, seeing our unfeigned Repentance, may turn away his *Wrath*, and shew us *Mercy*, for his Son's Sake. *Amen. Amen.*

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